

Abstract 396**TITLE:** Defining and Operationalizing Power for HIV Research**AUTHORS:** Johanna E. Soet, MA, W.N. Dudley, D. DiIorio

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: To create better HIV prevention interventions for women, researchers recently have begun to examine the influence of power in intimate relationships on women's safer sex behaviors. Yet, while there is much talk the role of power in women's behavior, there is little discussion in the HIV prevention literature on explicitly defining and measuring power. Additionally, there has been little agreement about how ethnic differences may influence the measurement of power in intimate relationships. The purpose of this work is 1) to review the current implicit definitions and measurements of power that are in use, and 2) to explore the reliability, construct validity, and factor structure of some hypothesized measures of power, and 3) to examine possible ethnic and gender differences in power measures.

METHODS: The data for this study were obtained from the third year of a three-year study on the safer sex attitudes and behaviors of college students in a large metropolitan area in the southeastern United States. The sample included 660 college students, % were female, 63.9 5 1. 2% white, and 48.8% African American. The mean of age was 21.05 $SD = 1.58$). In our analysis, we first explored the reliabilities and factor structures of three common types of power measures used in past research: 1) social decision making, 2) sexual decisionmaking, and 3) socio-economic disparity. Second, the construct validity of several measures of power was assessed by examining the relationship between indirect measures of power and a direct measure. Finally, we explored the relationship between both the direct and indirect measures of power and safer sex behaviors.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS: The results of these analyses will be discussed in terms of the validity of various "proxy" or indirect measures of power. Particular attention will be paid to gender and ethnic differences in the performance of these measures as well as theoretical differences between groups in the expression of power.

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